THE NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
May 31, 1968



# Anatomy of a traitor

## Two views of Kim Philby, the century's most audacious spy

By JOHN QUINN



HAROLD (KIM) PHILBY very nearly bungled his first assignment as a spy for the Soviet Union, and very nearly lost his life in consequence.

It was in Spain during the Civil War, and Franco's police were not as thorough as they should have been, perhaps, with the young English journalist. In any event, Philby lucked through and went on to become an audacious and highly successful Soviet agent and one of history's more remorseless traitors.

Philby recounts the episode in his book, "My Silent War," which he has sent out from his refuge in Moscow and which has been published here by Grove Press.

Not a spark of regret animates his memoirs, which constitute a rather deliberately blurred summary of his 30-year career as the Kemlin's window on British and American intelligence operations. As a devoted—indeed, fanatical—Communist, he tells nothing that would compromise the work of nameless colleagues still on the snoop.

We must look elsewhere to learn about the staggering extent of Philby's treachery, the flaccid self-assurance that permitted it to flourish and the bitter consequences that it produced.

A good place to start would be in another book, "The Philby Conspiracy" (Doubleday), a meticulously detailed account by three British newspapermen—Bruce Page, David Leitch and Phillip Knightley—of the reason why.

It is not a pretty story, but it is a salutary and necessary one.

It is good to see that it is the work of English hands, for a society that can indict itself can still reclaim itself. And make no mistake about it, English society is indicted, thoroughly and soberly, for criminal folly and indolent corruption that smoothed the way for Philby and his comrades in treason, Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean.

In sum, it did not matter that Burgess was a raging homosexual and violent drunkard. Or that Maclean had gaping character defects. Or that Philby's early Communist connections were a matter of record easily obtained by anyone capable of picking up a telephone.

No, they were of good families and had gone to the right schools and university (all were at Cambridge). Hence they simply could not be traitors.

Maclean, therefore, entered the diplomatic corps and became the principal conduit through which so much dearly earned atomic data was funneled freely to the Soviet Union from sources such as Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

Philby, therefore, could become head of England's counterintelligence effort against the Soviet Union without even undergoing a routine check on his reliability. As a result, from 1944 until the flight of Burgess and Maclean behind the Iron Curtain in 1951, every single Western attempt to gather anti-Communist intelligence or subvert Communist aims was known to the Russians well in advance. There is much blood on Philby's hands.

His duplicity—first asserted in this newspaper, by our London correspondent, Henry Maule—became virtually certain in 1963, when the truly unforgivable folly was committed. Philby was allowed to get away.

WHY? Page, Leitch and Knightley cannot say. Philby, smugly showing a glimpse of the colossal vanity that doubtless led him into the world of betrayal, suggests that he might have been tipped off, even as he had tipped off Maclean when Maclean's perfidy came to light.

It is not hard to believe. For, as spy-story writer John Le Carre suggests in his introduction to "The Philby Conspiracy," someone recruited Philby for Soviet service. Nobody knows who that someone is, or what he does. But it is quite conceivable that this someone is still active, and that his activity could have been compromised if Philby had been caught and had cracked.

Perhaps we shall never know. For what it's worth, however, we do know now what Philby thinks of the responsible figures in Whitehall and Washington with whom he came in contact.

And some of this makes rather good reading, for Philby is a witty and facile writer. He had nothing but respect and fear for Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, who was chief of the CIA when Philby was first secretary at the British Embassy in Washington and head of the English intelligence apparatus here.

Smith had "a cold fishy eye and a precision-tool brain," Philby writes about the investigation that followed the defection of Burgess and Maclean, and "I had an uneasy feeling that he would be apt to think that two and two made four rather than five."

Allen Dulles, a subsequent boss of the CIA, he considered "bumbling" and "easy to get around." He wonders why President Kennedy took Dulles' advice on the Bay of Pigs invasion. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, he writes, has "a bubble reputation." "Hoover did not catch Burgess or Maclean; he did not catch (another Russian spy Rudolph) Abel for years; he did not even catch me."

Philby rates the CIA as superior to the FBI—in social graces at any rate. The G-men he dismisses as stolid, country-bumpkin types, gruff of speech and insensitive to the nuances of wine selection. The CIA boys, on the other hand, at least knew that Burgundy is served at room temperature.

Philby says he once asked Hoover what he thought of the spy-catching ability of the late Sen. Joseph McCarthy, and that Hoover replied, elliptically: "I often meet Joe at the race track, but he has never given me a winner yet."

So much for the drollery. The fact remains that Philby gave his Soviet masters just about every winner we had in the stable, all safe bets. It is tempting to do *anything* to prevent this happening again.

Perhaps it would be better to say "anything the law allows," for as Le Carre notes, "Philby is the price we pay for being moderately free."